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INTERVIEWER: Hello, and welcome back to *The Student Hub Live* Results and Progressions special. Well, I hope you're having a good morning. We've certainly been having a fantastic time. And before we introduce our next session, which is one my favourites on study intensity and time management-- and I know a lot of you will have some brilliant tips and ideas, as you often do, to share with each other-- let's take a quick trip to HJ to see what you've all been talking about.

HJ: I think a lot people really enjoyed watching the session about the DSA and DSG and just talking about how supportive it is, which is really good. And we were just talking about people's experiences with applying for DSA and how it's meant that they can study and how supportive they find it, which is really fantastic to hear.

And I've also been on Twitter as well, and we asked people some of things that they do to prepare. And Kate says, just popcorn, pen, and paper, is what she needs to prepare for study. And Stewart says, exercise, which-- I'm not sure I'm one to agree with that one.

But also, Kate said that she thinks OUSA deserves a plug as well, which I think it does. Says there's lots of amazing opportunities with OUSA to volunteer and support throughout your degree. So I definitely agree with that one. And in terms of a device and preparation, they're really good as well. So we definitely recommend having a look at OUSA

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. And in addition to your registration and your funding, if you want to apply for disabled students allowance, the time to start doing that is now. And I know that the DSG Facebook have so much support from people who've been through that process and who can get you up and studying in the best possible way, as well, full module style, while that process is going through. So do check that out.

And then our freshers event on the 3rd and 4th of October. We'll be having sessions from OUSA and the disabled students group as well. And I'm really looking forward to those. Right, time is of the essence. We're doing time management, study intensity, and time planning. And I'm joined by Isabel Shelton and Kate Reece. Thank you for coming today.

KATE REECE: It's a pleasure.

INTERVIEWER: Such a big issue for students, this. And increasingly more so, because we see students picking up more modules, having more overlap. Why is this such a topical issue right now?

KATE REECE: Well, for example, I mean, I just [INAUDIBLE] this morning. We're here talking about time management, and I had a big rush on this morning getting my family organised, working out how I was going to get here, and fit in an hour study when I first got up, because I'm still studying myself, even though I work for the Open University.

And it made me smile, and it took me back to memories of when I studied my degree with the Open University as a young woman, those days, with young children and a part time job, trying to fit it all together. And I think it's just so topical for our students, because they're also such busy people, aren't they?

**ISABEL
SHELTON:** I know exactly what you mean, Kate. I had a similar experience rushing around this morning, trying to get everything done, checking my emails, trying to make sure I got here on time. Yes, I mean, I, too have been an OU student, and studied a couple of the language modules and actually got my certificate in higher education over the summer. Which I was incredibly proud of, because I knew just how much work I had to put into those. So absolutely, totally agree.

KATE REECE: And now, with staff tutors-- and one of the things we do in our job is that we have to work with students when they're getting into a bit of a pickle really. When they've taken on, perhaps, too much study and are really struggling to maybe do two courses. Or when they're just not keeping up, need rather long extensions, and negotiate, renegotiate the timing of the studies and things like that, that's part of our job.

And it happens regularly. And I don't think any student should ever beat themselves up if that happens to them. But our hope is some of the things we'll talk about this morning might give a few clues and tips about how to try and manage your time, manage pressure, money stress, and enjoy study.

INTERVIEWER: Because, of course, there are these two factors, aren't there? There's how much work you've got to do, and then how much life is throwing at you, which can interchange. So we've got a widget, there, that if you can let us know on the continuum what you're expecting this year-- are you expecting life to get busier or study to get more demanding, or maybe someone in between? Just select where you feel that you are on that scale, and then your results will submit. And you can also put comments in that chat about that, as well.

So this issue, then, of students coming to you, then, with these hours of study and these modules-- what happens, then, in terms of how people think those things through? Do people come and say, right, I can definitely fit 120 credits in, I'm working? How much consideration do people give, generally, to this whole idea of what they can do?

ISABEL

I don't think people realise, necessarily, how much study time is required for an OU module.

SHELTON:

The recommended study times for certain modules-- for a 60 credit module, the university, in the prospectus, recommends about 18 hours' study time a week. So conversely, for 30 point module, that means 7 hours. For 120 points, that's 36 hours of study a week, which is a vast amount of study time.

And the university doesn't recommend that you do 120 points if you're in full time employment. I mean, really, I think that's probably only feasible if you're in part time employment. But it's worth thinking about how many hours that recommended total is for the module you're registering for, and how you're going to fit that into an incredibly busy life.

Having said that, we're all hard-pressed to fit in that actual amount of study time every week, and there are going to be peaks and troughs. There are going to be times when you're just too hard-pressed to fit that in. And conversely, there may be weeks where you've got some spare time that you can do a bit more.

So I think it's working out your balance, really. Just how much time you think you've got available, and where you're going to make those adjustments to busy lives.

KATE REECE:

But it is worth noting that 120 credits-- 36 hours per week recommend study time-- that's the equivalent of doing a full time course of study at any university, isn't it?

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah, yeah.

KATE REECE:

And that shouldn't be underestimated. And of course, that time is going to be spent in lots of different ways. There is the reading of the course materials, and taking notes and all those kind of things.

But it also involves doing activities that are built into the modules, which are very important to help you interact with what you're doing and really get that learning really embedded in your head. And also, time to take part in discussions and forums, contact with other students, and your tutor. So there's lots of different things to fit into that recommended study time, isn't there?

And the other thing, I think, that-- we work in the education school, and some of our modules-- a few of them, you actually have to undertake some work-based learning as part of the module. So you have to build in work-based experience time within that study time. And others recommend that you get some experience for-- is it E109?

ISABEL

E109, which is a module where you're working in the early years, recommends a certain amount of time in a setting or school. And that's not compulsory, it's a recommendation. But it's enriching. If you've managed to budget that time in a setting, what you're doing is increasing your employability. But also, you're complementing the module material very effectively by applying theory to the practise. So yes, it's certainly worth checking any work-based requirements that you have to do.

SHELTON:

KATE REECE:

So one question we were asking ourselves as we prepared for today was, is it actually possible to study 120 credits? Is it realistic? And, yeah, I think we came up with an answer that, yes.

I'd like to share with you an answer that one of my students gave me, because I teach on two modules. And I was talking to one of my students, literally last week, who's just completed studying two 60 credit modules. And I said to her, what advice would you give to other students?

And she said to me, first of all, to make that decision to study for 120 credits is a big decision, and don't take it lightly. You really need to think hard about whether you've got the time to do it, and what compromises you have to make to be able to do that. She said if it's something you really strongly want to do, then remember-- when she was doing this, she had to study at least four or five days per week. That's a lot, isn't it? Four or five days per week.

And when the TMAs-- when the assessments were coming up, it was even more. So that was her experience. She also said, though, that remember-- always remember what your priorities are. And she said, alongside finding those hours in the week for her study, she always had to remember to be very mindful about finding the hours for her work.

But even more importantly, for her family and friends and the people who were important to her. And being really careful not to compromise on those things that she's really passionate about, and the people she's passionate about. But trying to achieve that balance, it's hard. It can be done. It can be done if you're working part time, but you really have to understand that

level of commitment that it takes.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ISABEL
SHELTON: I think it depends, as well, which 120 points you're doing. I think, for example, where you've got two complementary modules, it's a lot easier than doing two that are totally different. For example, I know quite a few students have studied very successfully E102 and E103.

Now, E102 is the Introduction to Child Education and Psychology, and E103 is the Learning and Teaching in Primary Education. The two are complementary in the sense that they're covering similar ground. They're part of the same degree paths in the degree path. I think that's a lot more doable than, say, if you're doing Physics and French on the open degree. I think that would be extremely challenging. So be careful what you choose, I think, is the message.

INTERVIEWER: Well, let's see what people are talking about on the hot desk, because some of this might be very familiar to Kate Hardcore with us. Thank you for the new nickname, Ross. And Davon is saying that 60 credits at level three were difficult enough for him. There's talk about full time and part time study and study hacks. So HJ, what's going on?

HJ: I think there's lots of chatter and lots of thoughts about this. I like the way Russ put this initially, and asked who was going kamikaze in studying 120 credits. I think we know some of the views on doing that many credits.

But there are a few people doing it. Kate's doing two level three modules. Gail's considering it for level two. And we know Kate is now the hardcore student. But I think Russ was saying how he staggered during 120 credits. So he'll start 90 in October, and then add 30 on later on in the later start dates.

But I think some of the advice we've been getting as well, to try and work out how you study and how much time you take to study-- so one thing I found when I did 30 credit module to start off with was that I take a little longer to read things and go through things. So I kept that in mind with my study intensity. But yeah, there-- there are some-- sorry, this chat is going very quickly.

But-- oh, yes! We've just had-- we've had educational advisors pop in. So if you do have questions, then you can let us know. But yeah, some people agree-- mix start dates up. So

yes, a lot of thoughts on this.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you, HJ, and thank you Carol Williams in the chat who is filling in. So do ask any questions. The chat does go really quickly, though. So if you're finding it hard to follow, don't forget there's a Pin button which is at the top right hand of the chat. You can pin that and scroll through, and then you can see what people are saying.

There's also a Help tab if things are going really fast. And don't forget our email-- studenthub@open.ac.uk. We'll try and answer as many questions as we possibly can. But if there's something that we haven't answered, or that you'd like to ask us outside of the session, then do please feel free to email us.

Some good points, here. And one of these points I wanted to pick up on, which is this whole-- the issue of, I guess, organising yourself, think about the study calendar. Because there is a sort of pattern, isn't there, within modules? So if you're doing 260 credits, it's likely that you would have similar sorts of assessment dates in the study calendar.

And if you're picking up a 30 again, that might feel quite different. Maybe not quite as half as 60 as it might appear to be, numerically. What would your advice be in terms of how students might organise themselves if some of those things are going on?

ISABEL
SHELTON: I think, as an AL, what I tend to do is suggest to students that right at the beginning of the module, they make a copy of the study calendar. They make sure that they've got the whole study calendar visible on the website, make a copy-- a printed copy-- of it, and then take a highlighter and just identify the pinch points during the year.

And also, be clear when Christmas and Easter falls, because there will be possibility of catch up weeks. Highlight on the calendar when you're going on holiday. So identify where you might be under pressure. Any working pressures that are likely to crop up during the-- it's just to get a sense of how the module is going to play out in terms of your working life and any family life, really. So yes, I think that that's a useful starting point.

KATE REECE: And then when you've got that calendar, it's then, particularly, putting a TMA--

ISABEL Yeah.

SHELTON:

KATE REECE: --dates--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

ISABEL Absolutely. The TMA makes--
SHELTON:

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

KATE REECE: --you know when they're coming, and you know if there's going to be clashes. And one thing we talked about is whether we encourage students to ask for extensions, and is that a good practise? And of course, it is possible to ask your tutor for an extension if you know you're going to have a clash and negotiate your hand-in timetable of it.

But I was saying to Isabel this morning, one of the good pieces of advice I was given as a student is remember that the hand-in date should be the last date by which you submit an assignment. But it doesn't mean that you can't actually prepare an assignment before that date, yes?

So sometimes, if you've got two TMN dates coming on top of each other, you start one early, yeah? Don't procrastinate, get on with it. Start it early. Have one done so that you've still got time to do the other. And don't rely on extensions. So extensions are there, but don't rely on them.

ISABEL I think it's useful to flag, as well, the tutors are working under pressure and have got very busy
SHELTON: lives, and have only got 10 days-- working days-- to turn around the assignment. So it's really helpful if a student can negotiate in advance, an extension, rather than just springing one on them in a panic.

INTERVIEWER: Well, Ross is playing down, now, his kamikaze studying, and making it sound ever so much more sensible. We've got Jessica and Carol giving some great advice in the chat, so thank you very much for doing that. And if you haven't joined in the chat yet, you can do that through the Watch and Engage function on the website.

So please do come in and join us. Any question is absolutely fine. I bet if you're thinking it, someone else is also.

OK, so we're talking about extensions and this whole idea of negotiating extensions. Now, is this wise for students? Is it better to get to grips with things and like you say, start prepping early, start trying to adjust for times. Or is it a better idea to say, actually, I want an extension

on this, that, or the other? What would you say is most kind for students, if all things were going according to plan?

KATE REECE: Plan. Plan so that you don't-- plan so that you don't need extensions. Don't plan extensions. Don't write them into your plan. Don't rely on them, certainly. A good plan will always set you in good stead.

Extensions are there-- I think if you start relying on extensions, you start knocking all your deadlines back. And I think that's something you always have to think about. When you apply for an extension, it means that you're eating into the study time for the next block of your module. So I would really say, do not rely on extensions. They're there if you really need them, but planning is the best thing that you can possibly do, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Now, I know in your staff/tutor roles. You'll be very aware of the waiting for various pieces of assessment. And also, sometimes, that substitution can apply for certain things. Is there any strategic advice you could give students, in particular when they've maybe got overlapping things about, looking at the weight of assignments and being strategic in their choices?

ISABEL SHELTON: We had a lot of discussion about this, didn't we, Kate? We were talking about strategic and instrumental study. And I think it's being realistic that to navigate your way through a module, sometimes you've got to be quite instrumental. And by that, I mean maybe focused on specific tasks, focused on the TMA, particularly.

Maybe read in different ways. Skim read some stuff. Other stuff, in greater depth. And I think-- exactly right, what you're saying, Karen, about the weightings of TMAs. I think it's really useful, at the beginning of the module, to just check what the weightings are. There may be a couple of TMAs where you've got to place much more emphasis in terms of study time, because it's worth-- I don't know-- 30% of your marks.

So it's checking that. And also, does your module have a substitution rule?

INTERVIEWER: Could you briefly explain that for some students? Because it can be an odd concept. So for those of our new students out there--

ISABEL SHELTON: Well, some modules-- not all, not all-- and that, again, is worth checking. Some modules have the opportunity for you to substitute one TMA. And there's some quite complicated calculations that go on.

INTERVIEWER: [? Is ?] [? it ?] [? like ?] [? the ?] [? off ?] side where I'm hoping--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

INTERVIEWER: --it's not quite

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

INTERVIEWER: --difficult to understand.

ISABEL All I would say, rather than me trying to explain the calculations that are made, is that if you do

SHELTON: think you're going to substitute, check carefully on your student calendar-- your study calendar-- to just calculate-- sorry-- your study calculator to just make sure you know what impact that substitution's going to have on your overall mark, because some-- I know one or two students that I've tutored have found that it's had more of an impact than they thought.

And I think Kate and I would always say, submit something. Submit something, even though maybe it's not your perfect work, but submit something and get some marks for it, rather than substitute.

KATE REECE: Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER: So in a nutshell, it's this idea that the-- ultimately, it's more complicated than this. But the top x number of assignments will count. So if you've got six pieces of submission, the top five will effectively be counted. And you can go in your student home page, find your calculator, put your hypothetical scores, and then see how it might impact--

ISABEL Yeah.

SHELTON:

KATE REECE: But there are quite a lot of modules that that doesn't apply to. So you don't-- you cannot rely on that, yeah.

ISABEL Got to check that.

SHELTON:

KATE REECE: So bottom line-- put something in. Any amount of study on a particular block in your module will give you some input, and will gain you some marks towards your assignment. So I think we would say that, generally speaking.

ISABEL Yeah.

SHELTON:

INTERVIEWER: So good advice there. Now, we asked you what you thought, in terms of this year, you'd expect. Let's see what the results were in terms of our continuum from life getting busier to study getting more demanding. Well, it seems like study's getting a lot more demanding for people.

Perhaps that's because you're moving up a level. Perhaps you're taking on more workload. But this whole idea of study getting more demanding does seem to fit with everybody at home. HJ, any comments you want to raise?

HJ: Yeah, we've just been having a good discussion about some things that we can do to prepare and plan. And one of the ones that Davon's popped by and-- I think he's one of our sages, he pretty much knows everything and has some of the best tips. But he says, if you know what modules you're doing and want to prepare, maybe do a MOOC so you're not going into it so fresh, as it were.

And we've had some advice about having a look how the modules are assessed. So if you are doing 120 credits, maybe some people don't like to do them both with the exams at the same time. Also, with the module websites opening early, some people have said-- as we're starting a little early, maybe just a week, to give you that buffer time. Just in case some things take longer or anything happens.

And looking at the TMA dates, as well, if you're doing a couple of modules at the same time, just to see if they overlap. Or maybe just book a little time off work and things like that. So always great advice in the chat. And our advisors, as well, have been helping us-- Jessica and Carol. So I'm sure, as well, if there's anything you do want to ask or we've missed or you think later, just email StudentHub@open.ac.uk. And I'm sure Jessica and Carol would love to get back to you and see how they can do that best for you.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. Now, we mentioned very early in the session about different levels of time. And I think just thinking about that study intensity and time planning, it'll be really useful just to have your thoughts about how students might break down some of those hours. So you'd mentioned the number of hours of study that might be possible.

One could think, 36 hours, no sweat. I can do that on a weekend. But that's not often how the

reality plays out. There are various tasks, and you'd mentioned the study planner and trying to break down some of those tasks.

Thinking strategically, then, how might students identify best some of the areas that they might need proper concentration, and things that maybe they could do when they were a little bit less alert? How can they break down some of those tasks in the week so that they can be most effective, I guess, in terms of how they carve their time up?

KATE REECE:

I think it's really important to know yourself, and know when you are at your best. And We were having a conversation, because I'm an early morning person. So I know that I will do my best writing between 7 AM and 9 AM in a morning. I know that that's when I'm most productive.

So when I've got writing to do, that's when I'd do it. So my advice would be, know when you're at your brightest, and really put the work in for the writing then. There may be other points in the day, though, when, for instance, you're travelling, or commuting. And you can use a mobile device to get online and maybe listen to some of the audio materials, think about some of the activities, for instance.

So it's thinking about, just how much can you concentrate, and when are you at your most energetic? Isn't it, I think?

ISABEL

SHELTON:

Totally agree. I mean, we were discussing-- I was saying I'm very much a night owl. I'm useless in the mornings. So I really prefer studying when it's relatively quiet at night. So I know it would be no use, me setting the alarm to try and do something in the morning, when I know that a couple of hours from, say about 9 to 11 o'clock at night is my optimum time.

I think the advice, Kate, that you're giving about you maximising your time during the day is, where can you save, or how can you optimise, say, travel time? The OU material is now downloadable onto most devices. And I think if you've got a long commute-- I mean, I used to have to travel for at least an hour to work in the morning, and it was really useful to use that time not so much for writing a TMA, but to just think about planning it, looking at the module material, perhaps listening to the audio-visual material.

I think we can take opportunity during the day when we've got, say, an extra hour or so, and just use for particular tasks. Maybe there's an activity that needs doing, and that you could fit it in to half an hour period or something.

KATE REECE: Again, it's knowing what's coming up with the next TMA so that you can strategically think, this is relevant to answering that question, so I will give it extra time and attention. And maybe-- well, that bit's interesting, but-- so maybe strategically, that's the bit I give less attention to. I think--

INTERVIEWER: You've got all these points, and we need to end, unfortunately. Because the time always flies away with us, and ironically, in such cases. And I know that everyone at home is going to really like this. But your final tip was about incentives.

KATE REECE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Something at the Student Hub Live we talk about quite regularly. So can you tell us your incentives, then, that you have for your study? What gets you through those difficult bits?

KATE REECE: I might have three hour block, but I always know that I'll finish after 40 minutes and take a break. So I plan in my breaks, and I plan in what I'm going to do in those breaks. So, on that break, I might have a cup of tea and a piece of chocolate. In that break, I might play my flute for 15 minutes and just let off a bit of steam there. After that, I might go for a walk around the block. So I plan in my treats.

**ISABEL
SHELTON:** Treats and rewards are essential. Have a bar of chocolate or a glass of wine or--

KATE REECE: Or go and talk to somebody.

**ISABEL
SHELTON:** Or go and talk to somebody. Just--

KATE REECE: You can tell you're a night owl.

**ISABEL
SHELTON:** Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: 11 o'clock in the morning, no--
[INTERPOSING VOICES]

INTERVIEWER: No, absolutely. And it's about finding the right things that are going to motivate you, and making time to enjoy them, as well. Isabel and Kate, thank you so much for joining us. It's

been a wonderful session, and I'm glad that we've ended on a chat for food, because as is often the case, it's around about that time of day when a biscuit is required.

So we're going to have a quick break and watch a video where Dan tells me about the Gardner Building. Grab a cup of tea. Grab a biscuit. We'll see you for our next session, which is going to be really, really useful for everybody here, irrespective of your level. We're going to talking about developing your skills as an online learner. And we have Professor Simon Bell, he's going to give us some really, really good advice. So we'll see you in a couple of minutes for that session.

[MUSIC PLAYING]